

It would be better money spent in training to send this \$1.5 billion to the southern border to the second front where there is a war going on but keep it on the American side. Let the local officials, the State officials, let the sheriffs along the border use this equipment. Many of them don't even have enough equipment. As one of them has told me, they're outmanned and they're outgunned by the drug cartels.

So keep that equipment, keep that training on the American side of the border. Support the American cause before we turn this equipment and turn this training capability to the other side. And it's a sad fact of life that we can't trust sending money, equipment, and training south of the United States border because of the corruption that occurs in northern Mexico.

So I would hope that Congress, when this initiative comes up, that we have lively debate about this \$1.5 billion; and before we send it all south of the border, that we rethink that and maybe spend part of that money, half of that money or most of that money, on the American side and let the border sheriffs of Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego use that equipment to fight the drug cartels, fight the crime on the American side of the border. I think that would be better money spent, American taxpayer money spent.

And that's just the way it is.

NORMALCY IS NOT RETURNING TO IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the American people have begun to receive their recovery rebate checks. Families will use this assistance to deal with the rising cost of food, of gas, and for just hard times in general. So Congress did the right thing when we wrote those checks. But if we want to give our economy another boost, there is one check that we should not write, and that's the check we will soon be asked to write for the continued occupation of Iraq.

This occupation has already cost taxpayers over \$1 trillion in direct and indirect costs. And Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, has calculated that the cost could soar, could, probably will soar to \$3 trillion or more. Think what that money could do for our economy if we invested it wisely in job training, education, health care, child care, green technology, and so many other critically important domestic needs.

Some believe that the occupation of Iraq is more important than all of these other needs combined. They believe that the billions of dollars we're spending in Iraq are making things better. The President actually told us recently that normalcy is returning back to Iraq. But Iraq cannot be returning to normalcy when the fighting and dying continues without any letup.

Over 3,000 Iraqi civilians and 170 of our brave troops have been killed so far this year: 3,000; 170. Over 1,100 of our troops have been wounded. Mr. Speaker, does that sound like normalcy to anyone? It doesn't to me. I can't say it, actually.

Iraq cannot be returning to normalcy when over 5 million of its citizens remain refugees. That number equals more than 20 percent of the entire Iraqi population at the beginning of our invasion in the year 2003.

Iraq cannot be returning to normalcy when tens of thousands of armed military contractors roam its streets terrifying the people and accountable to no one.

Iraq can't be returning to normalcy when we're planning for a 50-year foreign occupation, and some voices, in fact, are even calling for a 100-year occupation.

And Iraq cannot be returning to normalcy when fear and destruction continue to grip its people. The International Herald Tribune described the Iraqi people's nightmare in an article published on April 23. It said, "A simple decision to run an errand or choose an alternate route to work takes on life-altering consequences as the car bombs, stray bullets, rockets, and mortars claim those who merely happen by."

So, Mr. Speaker, as the war carries into its 6th year, nearly every family is touched by the death of a member of a close friend.

Iraq can only become normal again when it gets its sovereignty back. It can only become normal when it has the chance to rebuild and heal in peace, and that can only happen when we responsibly redeploy our troops and then lead a regional and international effort to bring social, economic, and political reconciliation to that devastated country.

So when we review supplemental funding like we will tomorrow, let's insist on a bill that fully funds the safe withdrawal of our troops but does not include one more cent for an occupation that isn't making us or the Iraqi people any safer.

Mr. Speaker, recovery rebate checks are great, but blank checks for the occupation of Iraq must stop.

AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the long American legacy of religious freedom and religious expression that we have inherited as a result of the wise foresight of our Nation's founders.

Throughout our history, we've been a Nation eager to rally to the cry of the motto, "In God We Trust," in times of peace and prosperity or in war and upheaval. This phrase, etched not only on our coins and here in this Chamber but

also on our hearts, has captured a truly American sentiment that our great historic experiment in democracy was founded on, and today, thrives in a robust sense of religious freedom.

Religious freedoms were specifically included in our Constitution as a reflection of the colonial experience of religious tolerance and free expression. Yet as religions' detractors would have it, the Constitution's enumeration of American religious freedoms is a paltry clause intended to merely protect us from the forced religion of a repressed central government.

This is a far cry from our Founders' full intentions. America's Founders were indeed careful to ensure that the government did not establish an official religion, but while they were at it, they crafted protection that would ensure our natural religious life would not falter under the machinations of those who would infringe on citizens' religious expression.

The first amendment is clear: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. This amendment does not establish the freedom from religion. Rather, it grants every American freedom of religion.

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It is upon this freedom that our land was founded, and it is this freedom that undergirds our strength and national character today.

As founding father John Adams wrote in 1776 on the eve of our independence, "Statesmen . . . may plan and speculate for Liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles, upon which Freedom can securely stand end."

By allowing for and encouraging the free exercise of religion, the Constitution set the stage for a vigorous national religious life. Most Americans are nothing if not a people of religion, committed to lives of quiet reverence to God, the practice of prayer and the exercise of their religion.

Our culture of religious life informs the way we raise families, conduct business and serve our neighbors. Throughout the centuries this culture also illuminated those who governed and served to temper our laws and governmental practices with the timely wisdom of Judeo-Christian ethics.

George Washington recognized that America would succeed if she adhered to the long legacy of religious values informing our public life and policy. In his first inaugural address, he said that "the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality, and the preeminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and command the respect of the world."

George Washington knew what we know today. A healthy culture of free religious expression keeps our Nation on the right track and our government's policies rooted in the values